

Be Sober, Be Vigilant.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED in the
PARISH-CHURCH

OF
St. Olave's Southwark,

JANUARY 31. 17³⁰₃₁.

14 By PHILIP AYSCOUGH, Rector of St. Olave's. *K*

L O N D O N:

Printed for THOMAS WOTTON, at the *Queen's Head*
and *Three Daggers* against St. Dunstan's Church in *Fleet-*
Street. 1731. [Price Six Pence.]

ST. JOHN

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH-CHURCH

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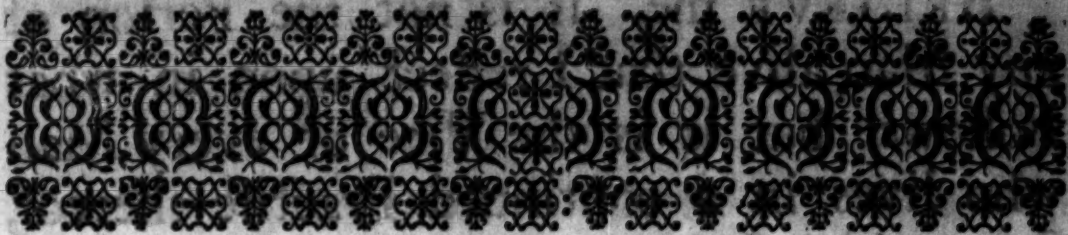
St. Olave's Southwark

JANUARY 31. 1734

By Philip Ayscough, Rector of St. Olave's.

L O N D O N :

Printed for Thomas Wotton, at the Queen's Head
and John Baskin against St. Dunstons Church in Fleet-
Street. 1734. [Price Six Pence]



To the Bookseller.

My Honest FRIEND,



T being the Custom to deliver a short Discourse from the Pulpit, otherwise you bear too hard upon the Patience of the Hearers, I was forced, for the Sake of Brevity, to omit several Particulars which are now put into their proper Places.

IN the Publishing of these few Sheets, I desire that you would make use of a good sort of Paper, and a full Letter, that the Reader be not displeased at the first Sight, and thereby become unwilling to run his Eyes through the Performance.

BELIEVE me, it is not the Person of any Man alive that I reflect upon in what Follows, but it is the Vice of every Man who lives in a continued Practise thereof, from which I the more earnestly endeavour to dissuade; at the same time proposing a Remedy.

I DOUBT not of your usual Accuracy in what relates to the Impression, by which you will greatly Oblige,

Your Assured Friend,

PHILIP AYS COUGH.

St. Olave's,
Febr. 18. 1748.

i Epist.



I Epist. of St. PETER, Chap. IV. Ver. 7.

The End of all Things is at hand ; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer.



THE Text hath two general Branches. I. A Declaration to be believed. II. An Exhortation to be put in Practice. A Declaration for our Learning, and an Exhortation to be put in Practice by our living. The Declaration hath two Particulars to be considered: 1. All Things shall have an End. 2. That the End of all Things is at Hand. The Exhortation is threefold ; or it consists of three principal Duties ; Sobriety, Watchfulness, and Prayer. First then, all things shall have an End ; which General must have a Limitation, or an Explication, for if all things shall have an End, why should I take Care either for my Body, or for my Soul, if both shall have an End ? Why should I seek after Heaven, if Heaven shall have an End ? Or why should I fear Hell, if that shall have an End too ? How then are we to understand this Proposition ? After this manner ;

manner ; all finite, and mortal Things shall have an End, they all shall be dissolved ; so then by the End of all Things St. Peter would have us understand, no more than the coming of Christ to Judgment, when there shall be a Dissolution, and Change of this World that now is, a Separation of the Good from the Bad, a Kingdom of Heaven for the one, and a Dungeon of everlasting Darkness for the other ; an End of all Things there shall be: *Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer.* The Atheist and the Epicure, in the 15th of the first to the *Corinthians*, makes this Inference ; *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die* ; this was to make an ill Use of our Mortality ; therefore one of the Ancients checks them thus, turning the Argument upon them : *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we shall die* ; what sayest thou ? Repeat it again ; *Let us eat and drink* ; so far well, the hungry Man may eat, and the thirsty Man may drink ; but go on, let us hear what follows, *for to morrow we shall die* ; sayest thou so thou bold Adventurer ! Why thou hast so terrified me, that I shall never joyn with thee in thy Course of Life ; truly by this last Sentence of thine thou hast quite made me afraid, to remain in the Place where thou art : Hear thou a Lesson from me, altogether different from what thou sayest ; *Let us fast and pray for to morrow we shall die.* So that whereas the Epicure frames this Reason, *all things shall have an End, let us eat and drink* ; we must invert it, and say with St. Peter, *all things shall have an End, therefore let us be sober, and watch unto Prayer.* What is then the Reason of the Weakness of the Epicure's Argument ? This it was, because he thought that Death did destroy both Soul and Body, and
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left nothing remaining, whereas Death is but a Separation of the Soul from the Body ; a Destruction of all things there shall not be, but a Destruction of some things, and a Change or Alteration of the rest ; not by Corruption of the Substances into nothing, but by the Alteration of the Qualities, by Dissolution and Change : *The End of all Things is at hand ; therefore be sober, and watch unto Prayer : And,*

Now for the Proof of this Particular we have many Testimonies of Scripture ; in the 102 Psal. we read, *Thou hast afore time laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thy Hands ; they all shall perish, but thou shalt endure, they all shall wax old as a Garment ;* and in the 13th of St. Mat. our Saviour expounding the Parable of the Tares, he saith, *so shall it be in the End of this World ;* therefore this World, or all things of this World shall have an End. The 2d Particular that I am to speak to is this ; that there shall not only be an End of all things, but this End of all things is at hand ; therefore St. John speaking of the End of the World says, *Behold he cometh,* as if he was immediately to appear ; he doth not say he shall come, or will come, as tho' he spake of something that was like to be hereafter ; and in the 22d of the Revelations he saith, *behold I come quickly,* as if he was just at hand ; therefore the same St. John in his 1 Epist. and the 2d Chap. telleth the Faithful of his Time, *that the very Time wherein they lived, was the last Time : And why the last time ?* but because it was towards the End of the World, or as some read it, the last Hour : And not only St. John and St. Peter assure us that it is at hand,

but likewise some of the other Apostles; for St. *James* Chap. V. says, *the Judge stands before the Door*. To be short, St. *Paul* said of himself, and the Saints that lived with him, that they were they *on whom the Ends of the World were come*, 1 Cor. Chap. x. ver. 11.

But you may object, how is this Saying of St. *Peter*, and of the other Apostles true, since it is a great deal above seventeen hundred Years since? Can that properly be said at hand, *to come quickly, to be the last time*, it being not yet known when that time will come? St. *Peter* seems to answer this in his 2d Epistle and at the 8th Verse, in the 3d Chap. *Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one Day is with the Lord as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day*; as if he should have said, altho' you think the End of the World is long in coming, and the Lord deferreth his coming a long time; yet it is not so, yea tho' he deferreth his coming for some thousand Years, you must remember that altho' a thousand Years seems to us a long time, it is otherwise with God, to whom no time is long; nevertheless for the full Solution of this Doubt, it is the received Opinion, that by the End of all things, the Apostles did primarily believe, that the End of the *Jewish* State and Polity, their City, their Temple, and Worship was at hand, that the fatal Destruction of *Jerusalem* was now very near; therefore they were advised to be sober, and temperate in all things, and watch that the Day of Visitation might not take them unawares, and to pray for the averting of God's Wrath, and that they might not be overwhelmed, and buried in the Ruins. The Apostles likewise might suppose, that the Day of Judgment would

would immediately succeed the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, being, as we may very innocently believe, induc'd thereto, by our Saviour's Words in *Chap. xxiv. Ver. 29.* of *St. Matthew's Gospel*; *Immediately after the Tribulation of those Days, shall the Sun be Darkened, and the Moon shall not give her Light, and the Stars shall Fall from Heaven, and the Powers of Heaven shall be Shaken*; Forgetting, or not rightly Observing, that our Saviour had told them, as it is in *Ver. 36.* of the same *Chap.* *That of that Day, and that Hour, knoweth no Man, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but the Father only*: And now in the

Second Place, the Exhortation comes to be considered, wherein three Christian Duties, or Virtues, are Enjoyned us, *Sobriety, Watchfulness, and Prayer*: The End of all Things is at hand, and the Judge of the Quick and the Dead is at the Door ready to take Vengeance of all Intemperance; *Be ye therefore Sober*; the Day of his Coming is uncertain, but the Day of your Departure hence is certain, and that to you, is the End of all Things upon Earth, *be ye therefore Vigilant and Watchful*, and prepare for an ever-enduring Futurity which will immediately follow thereupon: Your frail Bodies are not able to any good Degree to perform these Duties, pray therefore for the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, and it shall make the hardest things easy to you; *Be Sober*: the Apostle means, use that Measure of Meat and Drink which by your constant Experience makes you fit both in Body and Mind for the Service of God, and the Duties of your Calling: The same Command our blessed Saviour gives, *Luke ch. xxi. v. 34.* *Take heed lest at any time your Hearts be appressed with Surfeiting and Drunkenness*; therefore it is the immoderate Use of Wine, and other spirituous Liquors, which is only positively forbidden; for the Vine which produces such a salutary and wholesome Juice, moderately used, is what is very innocent in the Sight of God and Man, and it was God

himself who created that Plant for the Refreshment of those poor offending Creatures, and their Posterity, who were turned out of Paradise; for even in the very midst of *Judgment God remembers Mercy*: And it is the Abuse of so kind, so generous a Gift of Divine Providence, by Excess and Intemperance, which is the Crime; for the strictest Man alive cannot but grant it not only allowable, but absolutely necessary in several Medicinal Cases, and other accidental Occasions: But here lies the great Danger, by the exceeding a due Moderation, from the mischievous Consequences thereof, by adding Drunkenness to Thirst, which often is not only the Occasion of committing of many Extravagances which Men afterwards are very much ashamed of, but likewise of perpetrating the most heinous, the most deplorable, and the most tragical Facts, which can be committed under the Sun: And this was the Reason why *Lycourus*, a famous *Thracian* King, observing the pernicious Consequences of drinking to Excess, commanded all the Vines in his Kingdom to be cut down and demolished: But certainly, when the Authority of a Divine Law, and the Observance thereof commanded by the very Mouth of God himself, which denounces eternal Misery, and everlasting Punishment to those who live, and die in this Vice, cannot prevail upon Men to be Sober and Vigilant, it cannot be expected that human Laws shall ever be able to work a Reformation in this Case; so that all the serious Dehortations, and Dissuasives, publick and private, with the secret Sorrow, Grief, and Concern for the Loss of so many human Souls; whom after I have taken, a long, and as I hope a joyful Farewel, of this disorderly, and greatly dissatisfying World of ours, becoming true Penitents, I shall be glad to meet and embrace in the blessed Habitations of those peaceful Souls above: However, I must not, I dare not, for the sake of my own Soul, and for the sake of not betraying
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my Trust in what relates to God and my Neighbour; my far advanced Age continually putting me in mind how liable I am every Moment to be called up to give an Account of my Words and Deeds; I say I must not, I dare not, but tell them plainly, who live in a State of drinking to Excess, if they do not stedfastly resolve, and bring that Resolution into constant Practice; so that they will never once again be guilty of an Act of Intemperance, and give publick Testimony to the World, that they go on, and persevere, in an habitual Course, of Virtue, Sobriety, and Godliness, they are lost, and undone for ever, they can never see the Face of God; for *St. Paul* tells us in the 12th Chapter of his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, and at the 14th Verse, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*: And O! the never sufficiently to be applauded Courage of those happy Penitents, those glorious Converts, those Christian Heroes, who shall bravely stand it out against all the *Taunts, Scoffs, Contempt, and Rebukes* of their former Companions in Sin; for great shall be their Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven, and an Universal Joy with Praise and Thanksgiving shall run through all the Regions of Immortality and Bliss. But it may be said there are very many Men, Men of Consideration, Men of Figure, Men of good Account, who are highly valuable, and useful in promoting the Interest and Advantage of their Native Country, and the publick Benefit of the Community where they live; whose Sense, Reason, Capacity, and a great Compass of Understanding in what relates to the well Being, Support, Maintenance of, and Provision for the Necessitous; as also for giving their Advice and Assistance in what belongs to the Encouragement of Trade and Industry, are sufficiently remarkable; who the better to perfect the Business they have in hand, are often driven into *Midnight Carousals*, and by little *Heroisms* to show

who has the strongest Head, they exceed the Bounds of Moderation ; What is it then that can be said in this Case ? I answer, that altho' the most plausible Excuses that can be made to soften this Sin of excessive Drinking, which at this time is one of the National Sins, can never palliate the Heinousness thereof ; and tho' we abominate the Vice, yet we cannot but wish, that those very Men, may still go on to employ their Thoughts upon what may be necessary for the *Common-Good* ; and that the Giver of all good Things, out of his overflowing Mercy, would give them Health, Wealth, and Prosperity, together with all the Blessings, and Rewards that this World can bestow, for their indefatigable Pains, and Diligence, which upon all Occasions they readily impart, and communicate, for the sake of their Brethren and Fellow-Citizens of this inferior Orb : And I cannot but think, that if it should be my good Lot, together with many of you who are here present, to sit among the Saints at that great Day of Accounts, nothing could affect us so much in the midst of our Triumphs, as to see those who have merited so much Honour and Esteem here upon Earth, Confounded, Dejected, and heavily moving along with them, against whom this dreadful Sentence is pronounc'd, *Depart ye Cursed*. What other Thing then can we better do for them than once more to Beg, and Beseech the Almighty, that the happy Day may appear, which will incline them to retire from the constant Hurry, the daily Drudgery in the Business and Employments of this Life ; and to escape from that inveterate Custom of time out of mind, which has so far prevail'd amongst all Sorts and Degrees of Men, that *High-Drinking* seems as it were, to be established by a Law : And to resolve experimentally, to know what is that Pleasure, that inexpressible Pleasure, and Enjoyment of a cool, regular, and temperate Course of Life, which Men of Morals
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so passionately recommend to the Use and Practice of the un-
 experienced, who upon a constant, and a long continued Trial
 would certainly find, that they will sooner chuse to live under
 the Frowns of Fortune's Favourites, the Loss of all the Prefer-
 ments this World hath in its Power to give, nay even of Life
 itself, than be guilty of one single Act of Intemperance, and
 be deprived of that Heaven in their Breast; and when it once
 comes to this, what Favours from above may not Man expect
 to assist, and bear up the Sinking of his Spirits frequently
 cast down upon the Reflection of the great ^{multiplication} Multiplication of
 his Time past, and invigorate his disponding Heart with such
 Divine Consolations as these: Be of good Cheer, thou hast a
 stedfast Friend who will plead thy Cause before him who ever
 stands ready to receive what can be offered on the behalf of
 the poor Penitent: Hast thou been the vilest Sinner that ever
 breathed upon the Face of God's Earth? Hast thou like a
 wretched Prodigal thrown away thy Hours and Days by Thou-
 sands, and ten Thousands? Hast thou run through the whole
 black Catalogue of Sins? Be sorrowful and greatly ashamed
 of thy Faults committed against so much Goodness, long Suf-
 fering, and Forbearance; bring thy broken and contrite Heart,
 pierced through with the Sense of thy Sins even bleeding as
 it is in his Sight, and lay it down at the Footstool of his Mercy:
 Fear not; He will wait about thy Bed, and about thy Path,
 with Healing under his Wings, and will apply all suitable Reme-
 dies to all *thy Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores*, as the Pro-
 phet speaks, and make thee Partaker of his everlasting Joys. And
 now not having Time sufficient to insist on the Duty of Prayer,
 I shall briefly conclude this Discourse by only speaking to the
 Second Christian Virtue, and Duty, to which St. Peter
 Exhorts here in my Text, namely, *Vigilancy, or Watchfulness*;
 a Duty often Commended, and as frequently Commanded;
 which

which supposes that we are very prone to the Vice that is contrary to it, which is Dulness, Drowsiness, and Security: Now here you are to understand a Spiritual Drowsiness and Security in Sin, in Carnal Pleasures, and in the Cares of this Life; so also when the Scripture speaketh of Watching, it meaneth a Spiritual Watching against Sin unto Righteousness, as the Apostle speaks in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Chapter 15. ver. 34. *Awake to Righteousness and Sin not*; and in the 13th to the *Romans* and the 11th Verse, *It is now high time to awake out of Sleep*, meaning that we should be stirred up from the Life of the Flesh, unto the Life of the Spirit in Christ: And in the first to the *Thessalonians*, Chap. 5. ver. 6. The Apostle opposeth waking to sleeping in Sin; *Let us not Sleep as others do*, saith he, *but let us watch and be sober*: Let us not lie down as others do in Sleep, and Sluggishness, and so grow to a senseless Stupidity in the World as the Infidels do; from whom the Ignorance of God, like a darksome Night, hath taken away their Sense and Reason.

Therefore it would do well, as often as we step out of our Houses, carefully to consider, what we are going about, and to have a watchful Eye, least that little Traytor in our Breast, which we are apt too passionately to admire, and as it were, hug in our very Bosom; I mean that entirely beloved Flesh and Blood of ours, least it should betray that too little regarded Friend and Companion, the immortal Soul, its constant Inhabitant, and draw it in, as it passeth along through the business of the World, into some hurtful and vile Compliances: Satan and his Legions, who are in a strict Confederacy therewith, being ready to aid and assist those, whom the World hath turned aside from the Paths of Virtue and Sobriety, from being the Children of Light, become the Children of Disobedience, by leading them into a state of Insensibility.

Hence

Hence it is likewise, *my Christian Brethren*, that we may Observe, that it greatly concerns, even all those who are well settled and grounded in all the Principles of the Christian Faith, to Watch and Pray, that they *fall not from their own Steadfastness*, as *St. Peter* speaks, Chap. 3. ver. 17. of his 2d Epistle. Let us continue to watch our Body, our Souls, our Thoughts, our Words, our Works. The Body ought to be a well fortified Citadel, wherein the Soul resides as Queen Regent of the Place: Watch, that least a Breach be made therein, and thy Soul, the Lady and Mistress thereof, be carried away Captive: Watch thy Soul, it is the Spouse of Christ; watch it, that it doth not run after other Lovers: Watch thy Thoughts, for Thoughts are not free, as we commonly say, watch them that they be not evil, for evil and wicked Thoughts separate us from God, and the Communication of the Divine Spirit: Watch thy Words, that they break not out into unbecoming passionate Expressions, or any Dishonourable hard Speeches that may offend the Ears of the most holy God, least he turn his Face from thee, when thou shalt call upon him in the Day of Trouble; therefore *David* prayeth to God to *set a Watch before his Mouth, and to ward at the door of his Lips*: He mistrusts his own Strength and Wisdom, and therefore he prays God to keep fast the Door, and mark what Words come forth, as a Centinel watcheth the Place which he is appointed to keep, least an Enemy pass by that Way: *Set a Watch*, saith he, *O Lord before my Mouth, and keep the Door of my Lips*, *Psal. 141. ver. 3.* Watch your Eyes that they be not led away by the Sight of enticing Objects: Watch your Ears that they be not drawn in to listen to the wanton and insnaring Speeches of loose Company, the which may engage you in those Friendships whereby you may lose your Credit, Esteem and Reputation, the most precious Jewel upon Earth; for *evil Communication corrupts good Manners*, as speaketh the Apostle:

Watch

Watch your Feet that they run not along with the Workers of Iniquity, to practice deceitful Works, mischievous Arts, and secret Contrivances, which may disturb the Peace of your Neighbour, or the Peace of your own Soul : Watch your Hands, that they be not full of Gifts, Extortion, unfair Dealing, and entirely closed up by unbounded Avarice ; but let them be open to the *industrious Poor*, many of whom, I know, would most thankfully receive the Benefactions of the Rich, their Necessities being great, thro' the *Decay of Trade* in these Parts, by the Reason whereof, their usual Business and Employments, *chiefly depending upon the Labour of the Hand*, whereby formerly they did support their Families, falling short, they are become the true and proper Objects of Commiseration and Regard, to them whose Abilities may persuade them to look that Way. And above all things let us watch our Hearts, for that is the Fountain and Foundation of all the Actions of human Life ; and if that be clean, pure, and undefiled, all our Senses will pay obedience thereto : And we shall manifestly show, that our Hearts are upright, honest and sincere in the Sight of God and Man, if by the constant Assistance of the Divine Spirit from above, we shall be able to accomplish what we have so happily begun, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of the Lord, by following the Directions which St. Peter gives in his 2d Epistle, Chap. 1. beginning at the 5th Ver. which is, *to add to our Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity : That these things being in Us, and abounding, they may make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, from this time forth, and for evermore. Amen.*

